Hennepin as discoverer and author /

HENNEPIN AS DISCOVERER AND AUTHOR.* BY SAMUEL M. DAVIS.

* Read at the monthly meeting of the Executive Council, April 11, 1898.

EARLIER DISCOVERY TO THE TIME OF LA SALLE.

Columbus discovered the fringes and borders of the great western world on his first and second voyages. He left it to be explored and occupied by the rivals of many different nations. The French, the English, and the Spanish, sent out many adventurers and explorers, the prows of whose vessels were turned ever westward. Nicollet, Marquette, and La Salle; the Cabots, Frobisher, and Drake; Ponce de Leon, Balboa, and De Soto, all won laurels and enduring fame for themselves from the discoveries and explorations made on this continent. The French, naturally a race of explorers, in whom discovery speedily develops into a passion, were among the foremost to penetrate far into the interior of the new world. They came either as explorers and discoverers in search of adventure, as leaders of expeditions, and as traders and soldiers, or as missionaries with Bible and Crucifix, carrying the gospel of Cross and Church to the fiercest savage tribes in the remote wilderness. They passed westward by the natural chain of communication, consisting of rivers and the line of great lakes, until they pierced the very center of the continent itself, and established wherever they went trading posts and mission stations. These afterwards developed into the numerous towns and cities which still bear the names of the early French explorers. They pushed their enterprises throughout the entire valley of the Mississippi and traversed the remotest regions of the Northwest. With unwearied feet they stayed not until they had made good their claims of discovery by actual possession, and then rested not from their labors until 224 they had erected the cross of conquest beside every lake and watercourse throughout the heart of the continent.

Library of Congress

We naturally divide the first pioneers into two classes: he first were commissioned by king or emperor, and with sword in their hand they pushed their discoveries farther and farther toward the setting sun, in the hope of winning empires for their sovereigns, and the wealth of unclaimed Eldorados for themselves. The second were pious and devout missionaries, with letters patent from pope on bishop, who, without hope of earthly gain, but inspired with a lofty zeal and ardent faith, kept step with the more worldly conquerors and under the banner of the cross expected to gain for themselves and their converts eternal felicity beyond the grave. These devout and zealous men were usually attached to the company and subservient to the will and orders of the leader of the exploring party. It was to this class that Father Louis Hennepin, the chief character of this sketch, belonged.

La Salle was the most noted French explorer that ever traversed the valley of the Mississippi. He began his great western voyage of discovery on the 7th day of August, 1679. Among those who accompanied him on that memorable expedition was Louis Hennepin, a Franciscan priest of the Recollect order. By the middle of January, 1680, La Salle had conducted his exploration to the banks of the Illinois river. Near lake Peoria he commenced the erection of Fort Crèvecœur. It is not within the purview of this paper to relate the adventures, discoveries and wondrous achievements of this redoubtable Frenchman. His biography is filled with accounts of incredible hardships and superhuman efforts. The story of his life shows him, though baffled, a conqueror, and though defeated, yet winning enduring and lasting fame. In estimating his character, Francis Parkman says: “Never, under the impenetrable mail of paladin or crusader, beat a heart of more interpid mettle than within the stoic panoply that armed the breast of La Salle. To estimate aright the marvels of his patient fortitude, one must follow on his track through the vast scene of his interminable journeyings, those thousands of weary miles of forest, marsh, and river, where, again and again, in the bitterness of baffled striving, the untiring pilgrim pushed onward towards the goal which he was never to 225 attain. America owes him an enduring memory; for in this masculine figure, cast in iron, she sees the heroic pioneer who guided her to the possession of her richest heritage.”*

* La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West, p. 407.

HENNEPIN'S CAPTIVITY AND DISCOVERIES IN MINNESOTA.

In February, 1680, La Salle selected Michel Accau, Antoine Auguel, known also as Du Gay,† and Father Hennepin, for the arduous and dangerous undertaking of exploring the unknown regions of the upper Mississippi. Accau, because of his knowledge of the Sioux language and customs, was Chosen as the leader of the expedition, but Father Hennepin, as its historian, takes most of the credit both of the leadership and discovery to himself. Daring and ambitious of the title of a discoverer, he was not unwilling to go upon the expedition, although he is said to have desired some delay on account of a sore mouth.

† In the spelling of these names I have followed Parkman. They are also spelled Michael Accault or Ako, and Auguelle, the latter being more commonly called “the Picard Du Gay” (or du Guay).

Their canoe was pushed from the sandy shore of the Illinois river on the last day of February, 1680. Besides the travellers, it contained a generous supply of tobacco, knives, beads, awls, and other goods, to a considerable value, supplied at La Salle's cost. Referring to this act of generosity, Hennepin says in the first edition of his work, although it is omitted in all subsequent editions, that La Salle was liberal enough to his friends. The friar bade adieu to La Salle and his companions, while his venerable colleague, Ribourde, gave him his parting benediction, saying, as he spread his hands over the head of the reverend traveller, “Be of good courage and let your heart be comforted.”

The travellers were detained at the mouth of the Illinois for some time on account of the ice floating in the Mississippi. As soon as opportunity offered, the three travellers turned their canoe northward and plied their paddles against the current of the Mississippi. We are informed that during their voyage they were exemplary in their devotions. Hennepin tells

us that they said their prayers at morning and night and the angelus at noon, invoking St. Anthony of Padua that 15 226 he would protect them from the perils surrounding their way; and Hennepin, not without reason, prayed that it might be the good fortune of the company to meet the warlike Sioux by day rather than by night. They proceeded unmolested until they reached the region about the mouth of the Wisconsin. At this point the petitions of Hennepin were realized, and he tells us of their capture in the following language:

Our prayers were heard when, on the 11th of April, 1680, at two o'clock in the afternoon, we suddenly perceived thirty-three bark canoes, manned by a hundred and twenty Indians, coming down with extraordinary speed, to make war on the Miamis, Islinois, and Maroha. These Indians surrounded us, and, while at a distance, discharged some arrows at us; but as they approached our canoe the old men seeing us with the calumet of peace in our hands, prevented the young men from killing us. These brutal men, leaping from their canoes, some on land, others into the water, with frightful cries and yells, approached us, and as we made no resistance, being only three against so great a number, one of them wrenched our calumet from our hands, while our canoe and theirs were made fast to the shore. We first presented them a piece of Petun or French tobacco, better for smoking than theirs, and the eldest among them uttered these words, “Miamiha, Miamiha.” As we did not understand their language, we took a little stick, and by signs which we made on the sand, showed them that their enemies, the Miamis, whom they sought, had fled across the river Colbert to join the Islinois; when then they saw themselves discovered and unable to surprise their enemies, three or four old men laying their hands on my head, wept in a lugubrious tone, and I with a wretched handkerchief I had left, wiped away their tears. These savages would not smoke our peace-calumet. They made us cross the river with great eries, which all shouted together, with tears in their eyes; they made us paddle before them, and we heard yells capable of striking the most resolute with terror. After landing our canoe and our goods, some part of which they had already stolen, we made a fire to boil our kettle; we gave them two large wild turkeys that we had killed. These savages having called their assembly to deliberate on what they were to do with

us, the two head chiefs of the party approaching, showed us, by signs, that the warriors wished to tomahawk us. This compelled me to go to the war chiefs with one of my men, leaving the other by our property, and throw into their midst six axes, fifteen knives, and six fathom of our black tobacco. Then bowing down my head, I showed them, with an axe, that they might tomahawk us, if they thought proper. This present appeased several individuals among them, who gave us some beaver to eat, putting the three first morsels in our mouth according to the custom of the country, and blowing on the meat which was too hot, before putting their 227 bark dish before us, to let us eat as we liked. We spent the night in anxiety, because, before retiring at night, they had returned our peace calumet.

On the nineteenth day of the journey of the three travellers the Indians landed their prisoners in a bay about five leagues below the Falls of St. Anthony. The worthy father had a severe experience and foretaste of the oppression in store for him during the journey. Upon opening his breviary, when he began to mutter his morning devotions, the Indians gathered about him with faces which showed their superstitious terror. They gave him to understand that his book was a bad spirit, with which he was to hold no more converse. In their ignorance, they believed that he was invoking a charm for their destruction. Accau and Du Gay, realizing the danger that was imminent, begged the friar to dispense with his devotions, fearing that they all might be tomahawked by the Indians. The good father, however, asserts that his sense of religious obligation rose superior to his fears, and he resolved to say his prayers at all hazards, although he asked pardon of his two friends for in this way imperilling their lives. In this emergency, however, as in most of the difficulties which beset his way, he found a device by which he could at once fulfill his religious duties, without imperilling his life or the lives of his friends. He says that he placed the breviary open upon his knees and sang the service in loud and cheerful tones. This seems to have had a salutary effect upon the warriors, as it had no savor of sorcery, and they now imagined that the book was instructing the good father to sing for their amusement. Accordingly, they conceived a favorable idea of both the priest and the method of his devotions.

One of the chiefs, named Aquipaguetin, who had lost a son in the war with the Miamis, being angry that the war party had not proceeded with their expedition, so that he might avenge himself for the loss of his son, was particularly hostile and enraged toward the captives. Several times during their captivity this warlike chief was on the point of tomahawking the prisoners. It may be somewhat of a question whether or not he was as desirous of their scalps as he was of their property, for he seemed on each outbreak of his anger 228 to be appeased by gifts. The old chief had a peculiar method of appropriating their property, which, according to Indian custom, was in their untutored state “due process of law.” He conveyed with him the bones of a deceased relative, which he was carrying home wrapped in numerous skins prepared with smoke after the Indian fashion, decorated with feathers and quills. Placing these relics in the midst of his warriors, he would call on all present to smoke to their honor. After the smoking ceremony was over, Hennepin was required to appease the departed spirit with the more substantial tribute of cloth, beads, tobacco, and hatchets, which were laid upon the bundle of bones. The offerings of the friar were then, in the name of the deceased, distributed among the warriors present.

The three captives were distributed, and each was given to the head of a family in place of their children who had been killed in war. The Indians then seized all their property and broke their canoe, probably fearing that the white men might return to their enemies. The band of Indians then commenced a march overland to the lake of the Issati (Mille Lacs). Hennepin tells us that they were forced to march from daybreak until two hours after nightfall and to swim over many rivers. The braves carried the two other Frenchmen on their shoulders in fording these streams, because they could not swim; but he was compelled to swim these rivers, which he says were often full of sharp ice, and he adds that his legs were bloody from being cut by the ice of shallower water which he forded, and that on leaving the water be could hardly stand on account of the cold. He also says that they partook of food only once in twenty-four hours, and that then the barbarians gave them grudgingly only some pieces of meat. There is not much doubt that the historian of this expedition is correct when he stales that the Indians marched with great speed,

and that it was very difficult for Europeans to keep up with them. In order to hasten the footsteps of the white men, the Indians often set fire to the grass where they were passing, so that they had to advance or be burned. They at length arrived at the village of the Issati, near Mille Lacs, the source of the Rum river, named by Hennepin the St. Francis. The reception they met on their approach is best told in the words of Hennepin himself:

229

After five days' march by land, suffering hunger, thirst and outrages, marching all day long without rest, fording lakes and rivers, we descried a number of women and children coming to meet our little army. All the elders of this nation assembled on our . account, and as we saw cabins, and bundles of straw hanging from the posts of them, to which these savages bind those whom they take as slaves, and burn them; and seeing that they made the Picard du Gay sing, as he held and shook a gourd full of little round pebbles, and seeing his hair and face were filled with paint of different colors, and a tuft of white feathers attached to his head by the Indians, we not unreasonably thought that they wished to kill us, as they performed many ceremonies, usually practiced when they intend to burn their enemies.

During his stay among the Sioux, Hennepin was assigned to the protection of his ancient enemy, Aquipaguetin, who, seemingly to atone for his harsh treatment of the holy father, immediately adopted him as his son. The three companions were separated, and Hennepin was conducted to the lodge of his adopted father, near the shore of Mille Lacs. Here Hennepin was received cordially and placed on a bear skin before the fire, while to relieve his fatigue he was anointed by a small boy with the fat of a wildcat, which was supposed to be a specific for all lameness of limb on account of the agility of that animal. The chief displayed to Hennepin his six or seven wives, who were bidden to regard him, as their son.

The Indians, seeing him so weak that he could hardly stand, either on account of fatigue or some malady, erected for him a sweating cabin, where they gave him a steam bath three times a week, from which he declares that he received much benefit.*

* These baths are given in a small hut, covered closely with buffalo skins, into which the patient and his friends enter, carefully closing every aperture. A pile of heated stones is placed in the middle, and water is poured upon them, raising a dense vapor. In 1868 they were still in use among the Sioux and some other tribes.

The Indians regarded Hennepin as endowed with powers of magic, and they stood in awe of his pocket compass, as well as of “an iron pot with three lion feet,” which they would not touch with uncovered hands. Hennepin tells us that he passed his time in various occupations about the camp; in tonsuring the heads of the Indian children, and in bleeding certain persons affected with asthma, as well as dosing others with orvietan, a drug held in high regard in that day, of which 230 he had a good supply. His religious efforts with the Indians seem to have proved unavailing, as he says he could gain nothing over them in the way of their salvation, on account of their natural stupidity.

While there was not much love lost between Hennepin and his Indian father, there seems to have been a strong attachment between Ouasicoudé, the principal chief of the Sioux in that region, and the three Frenchmen. He asserted that he was angry that they had been robbed, which he had been unable to prevent. He told Hennepin's adopted father and the other Issati warriors in council that they were like a pack of curs who seize a piece of meat and run away with it.

One thing which caused the Indians to regard Father Hennepin as different from his two companions was the fact of his being able to write. In order to learn the language, he asked the names of many objects, and then reduced the spoken words to writing. This afforded great amusement to the Indians. He says they often put questions to him, but as he had to look at his paper in order to answer them they said to one another: “When

we ask Pere Louis, he does not answer us; but as soon as he has looked at what is white [for they have no word to say paper], he answers us, and tells us his thoughts. That white thing," they said, "must be a spirit which tells Pere Louis all we say."

During the captivity of Hennepin he was enabled to settle a geographical question of considerable importance. It was supposed that the Mississippi river emptied into the Gulf of California and that the great ocean lay not far west of that river. On the maps of that day the northwest passage was laid down as through the straits of Anian, which were supposed to be not far from the source of the Mississippi. Hennepin learned from Indians who came to the village and who stated that they had come from the west fifteen hundred miles, a journey which occupied four months, that they had seen no sea nor any great body of water. They described the country to the far northwest with general accuracy, saying that it contained no large bodies of water, but that it had many rivers and that there were few forests in that region. Hennepin decided, from these statements, that the straits of Anian, as shown upon the maps at that time, had no existence. He also supposed that the route to the Pacific was through 231 the rivers mentioned by these Indians. With reference to his conclusions on the subject, he says:

All these circumstances make it appear that there is no such place as the Straits of Anian, as we usually see them set down on the maps. And whatever efforts have been made for many years past by the English and Dutch, to find out a passage to the Frozen Sea, they have not yet been able to effect it. But by the help of my discovery, and the assistance of God, I doubt not but a passage may still be found, and that an easy one too. For example, we may be transported into the Pacific Sea, by rivers which are large and capable of carrying great vessels, and from thence it is very easy to go to China and Japan, without crossing the equinoctial line, and, in all probability, Japan is on the same continent as America.

The Indians had promised Hennepin, when he complained of hunger, that the tribes should go on a buffalo hunt and there would then be plenty of food. At length the time for

departure came, and each band was assigned to its special hunting ground. Fearing to accompany his Indian father, lest he might take revenge for the berating of Ouasicoudé, Hennepin declared that he expected a party of French explorers to meet him at the mouth of the Wisconsin river, who would bring a supply of goods for the Indians and sufficient food. He declares in his narrative that La Salle had, in fact, promised to send traders to that place. This assertion may have had some truth in it, but whether it was true or not, it served the purpose for which it was made.

At length the Indians set out, numbering about two hundred and fifty warriors, with their wives and children. During the time of their captivity the three Frenchmen had occasionally seen each other, and all were included in the hunting party. They descended the Rum river, called by Hennepin the St. Francis, which forms the outlet of Mille Lacs. Hennepin was refused passage in the canoe paddled by Du Gay and Accau. The latter would not listen to the friar's appeal to be taken on board, but shouted to him that he had paddled him long enough already. He was afterwards taken in, however, by two Indians who took pity on him and brought him on his journey. The party encamped at the mouth of the Rum river, near where Dayton, Minnesota, is now situated.

Hennepin was desirous of leaving the Indian camp and anxious to set out for the Wisconsin river to meet the party 232 of white men, who, he alleged, were to arrive at that place. His friend, the great chief Ouasicoudé, who had heretofore befriended him, made it possible for him to be granted this privilege. Du Gay also was permitted to accompany him, but Accau preferred life with the Indians to travelling with Hennepin. The two adventurers were given a small birch canoe and an earthen pot, and, armed with a gun and knife and a robe of beaver skin, they set out on their journey. Descending the Mississippi, they soon arrived at the Falls of St. Anthony. The following account is given of the falls and of what the travellers found there on their downward journey:

The navigation is interrupted by a cataract which I called the Fails of St. Anthony of Padua, in gratitude for the favors done me by the Almighty through the intercession of that great

saint, whom we had chosen patron and protector of all our enterprises. This cataract is forty or fifty feet high, divided in the middle of its fall by a rocky island of pyramidal form. The high mountains which skirt the river Colbert last only as far as the river Ouisconsin, about one hundred and twenty leagues; at this place it begins to flow from the west and northwest without our having been able to learn from the Indians, who have ascended it very far, the spot where this river rises. They merely told us, that twenty or thirty leagues above, there is a second fall, at the foot of which are some villages of the prairie people, called Thinthonha, who live there a part of the year. Eight leagues above St. Anthony of Padua's falls, on the right, you find the river of the Issati or Nadoussion, with a very narrow mouth, which you can ascend to the north for about seventy leagues to Lake Buade or [the Lake] of the Issati where it rises. ...

... As we were making the portage of our canoe at the Falls of St. Anthony of Padua, we perceived five or six of our Indians who had taken the start; one of whom had climbed on oak opposite the great fall where he was weeping bitterly, with a well dressed beaver robe, whitened inside and trimmed with porcupine quills, which this savage was offering as a sacrifice to the falls, which is in itself admirable and frightful. I heard him while shedding copious tears say, addressing this great cataract: “Thou who art a spirit, grant that the men of our nation may pass here quietly without accident, that we may kill buffalo in abundance, conquer our enemies, and bring slaves here, some of whom we will put to death before thee; the Messenecqz *lsqb;so they call the tribe named by the French Outouagamis] have killed our kindred, grant that we may avenge them.” In fact, after the heat of the buffalo hunt, they invaded their enemies' country, killed some, and brought others as slaves. If they succeed a single time, even after repeated failures, they adhere to their superstition. This robe offered in sacrifice served one of our Frenchmen, who took it as we returned.

233

Library of Congress

About three weeks after Hennepin first saw the Falls of St. Anthony, as here narrated, he met Duluth, who was on his way to release these Frenchmen from their captivity. Hennepin writes of this as follows:

On the 25th of July, 1680, as we were ascending the river Colbert, after the buffalo hunt, to the Indian villages, we met the Sieur de Luth, who came to the Nadoussious, with five French soldiers; they Joined us about two hundred and twenty leagues distant from the country of the Indians who had taken us; as we had some knowledge of their language, they begged us to accompany them to the villages of those tribes, which I did readily, knowing that these Frenchmen had not approached the sacraments for two years. The Sieur de Luth, who acted as captain, seeing me tired of tonsuring the children, and bleeding asthmatic old men to get a mouthful of meat, told the Indians that I was his elder brother, so that, having my subsistence secured, I labored only for the salvation of these Indians. ...

Toward the end of September, having no implements to begin an establishment, we resolved to tell these people, that for their benefit we would have to return to the French settlements. The great chief of the Issati or Nadouessiouz consented, and traced in pencil, on a paper I gave him, the route we were to take for four hundred leagues of the way. With this chart, we set out, eight Frenchmen, in two canoes, and descended the rivers St. Francis and Colbert.

Thence the adventurers made their way to Canada, and subsequently Hennepin arrived in France. In 1683 he published in Paris the first account of his American travels and captivity under the title “Description of Louisiana.” There were afterward many editions and translations of this book printed. As many as twenty-eight different editions and publications bear his name.

Father Hennepin and his fellow voyageurs were the first white men whose eyes had rested on the waters of the Mississippi as they foamed and tossed over the Falls of St. Anthony.

Where those Frenchmen more than two centuries ago stood, beholding in the clear sunlight the glistening spray of the Father of Waters, now stand the great flouring mills of Minneapolis, grinding the golden grain from the vast prairies of the Sioux. The sound of this machinery surpasses the roar of the primitive cataract, while the clear air of that earlier day is filled with smoke of modern locomotive and blazing furnace. Across that same stream over which Hennepin and Auguel paddled their frail canoe, the steel and granite highways 234 of commerce rear their arching columns. Hennepin's name is linked indissolubly with his discovery as every foot of soil for many miles in every direction from the Falls of St. Anthony is handed down from generation to generation through the records of the county which bears his name.

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF HENNEPIN.

It is proper in this connection to look for a moment at the history and character of the discoverer. He was the first European to see and name the Falls of St. Anthony; the first to explore the Mississippi above the mouth of the Wisconsin; and the first to publish an account of his journeys and discoveries in Europe. The facts concerning the early life of Hennepin are meager.

He was born in Hainaut, a province of Belgium, in the town of Ath. During his early years he wished to visit foreign countries in search of adventure. In order to gain the object of his ambition he became a priest, as this was the surest road, in that age, to distinction. He became a member of the Recollect order of the Franciscans. He seems to have been chaplain, in an early part of his career, at a hospital in Flanders, and was subsequently present at the battle of Seneffe in 1674. Two years later he received an order from his superior to embark for Canada. With this he gladly complied, as he hoped to be able in the new world to carry out his long cherished plan of discovery and exploration. He spent two years in the neighborhood of Quebec and Kingston in various undertakings and adventures, on one of which he penetrated as far among the Iroquois of New York as Albany. In the year 1678 he was sent to join the expedition of La Salle, then about to

embark on a voyage of discovery to the great lakes of the Northwest. His subsequent career has already been traced.

Considerable discussion and speculation has arisen as to the authenticity and veracity of the accounts he gave of his discoveries and explorations. In 1683, three years after his discovery of the Falls, he published in Paris his “Description of Louisiana.” Subsequently many editions of this original work appeared. The many changes and variations in these subsequent accounts have given rise to grave doubts as to 235 Hennepin's veracity. His first book was published during the lifetime of La Salle, his superior officer on the expedition about which he was writing.

Let us examine the evidence in the statements of his contemporaries, and of those who lived at the time of the publication of the various editions. La Salle, in a letter written August 22, 1682, probably to the Abbé Bernou, about the time of Hennepin's return to France, says:

I have deemed it seasonable to give you a narrative of the adventures of this canoe, because I have no doubt it will be spoken of, and if you desire to confer with Father Louis Hennepin, Recollect, who has gone back to France, it is necessary to know him somewhat, for he will not fail to exaggerate everything; it is his character; and to myself, he has written me, as though he had been all ready to be burned, although he was not even in danger; but he believes that it is honorable for him to act in this way, and he speaks more in keeping with what he wishes than what he knows.

The researches of John Gilmary Shea inform us that Father Le Clercq, in 1691, referred to Hennepin and his first work in terms of praise; but that De Michel, the editor of Joutel in 1713, said:

Father Hennepin, a Fleming, of the same order of Recollects, who seems to know the country well, and who took part in great discoveries; although the truth of his Relations is very much contested. He is the one who went northward towards the source of the

Missicipi, which he called Mechasipi, and who printed at Paris a Relation of the countries around that river under the name of Louisiana. He should have stopped there and not gone on, as he did in Holland, to issue another edition much enlarged, and perhaps not so true, which he dedicated to William III, Prince of Orange, then King of Great Britain, a design as odd as it was ridiculous in a religious, not to say worse. For after great long eulogies which he makes in his dedication of this Protestant prince, he begs and conjures him to think of these vast unknown countries, to conquer them, send colonies there, and obtain for the Indians the knowledge of the true God and of his worship, and to cause the gospel to be preached. This good religious whom many, on account of his extravagance, falsely believed to have become an apostate, had no thought of such a thing. So he scandalized the Catholics and set the Huguenots laughing. For would these enemies of the Roman church pay Recollects to go to Canada to preach Popery as they called it? Or would they carry any religion but their own? And Father Hennepin, can he in that case offer any excuse?

236

As a result of Hennepin's dedication and declarations in this edition published in Utrecht in 1697, the British were induced to send some vessels to enter and explore the Mississippi. The governor of Canada, Callieres, writing to the minister Pontchartrain, May 12th, 1699, said: “I have learned that they are preparing vessels in England and Holland, to take possession of Louisiana, upon the *Relation* of Père Louis Hennepin, a Recollect, who has made a book of it, dedicated to King William.”*

* Smith's History of Wisconsin, vol. I, p. 318.

That this action of Hennepin's actually took place seems to be incontrovertible, from the fact that when the good friar wished to return to America, Louis XIV sent the following despatch to Callieres, then governor of Canada:

His majesty has been informed that Father Hennepin, a Dutch Franciscan, who has formerly been in Canada, is desirous of returning thither. As his majesty is not satisfied with the conduct of the friar, it is his pleasure, if he return thither, that they arrest him and send him to the Intendant of Rochefort.

Still later Father Charlevoix said of Hennepin's writings:

All these works are written in a declamatory style, which offends by its turgidity and shocks by the liberties which the author takes and his unbecoming invectives. As for the substance of matters Father Hennepin thought he might take a traveler's license, hence he is much decried in Canada, those who had accompanied him having often protested that he was anything but veritable in his histories.

In recent years there have been apologists of the Franciscan priest who claim that his statements are both truthful and accurate. Notable among these are John Gilmary Shea and Archbishop Ireland. In 1880 Mr. Shea published a translation into English of Hennepin's “Discovery of Louisiana,” from which several of the citations in this paper are copied. In his preface to that work he says:

Doubts thrown upon Hennepin by the evident falsity of a later work bearing his name, have led to a general charge of falsehood against him. In justice to him, it must be admitted that there are grounds for believing that his notes were adapted by an unscrupulous editor, and the second book altered even after it was printed.

The claim is made that Hennepin's narrative is truthful, and that the inconsistencies and differences between the first 237 and subsequent editions of his work are caused by unauthorized interpolations by the editor. Shea, after dwelling at length on the various phases of this question, says:

To sum up all, the case stands thus: “The Description of Louisiana,” by Father Hennepin, is clearly no plagiarism from La Salle's account, and on the contrary the so called La Salle

Relation is an anonymous undated plagiarism from Hennepin's book, and moreover the Description of Louisiana is sustained by contemporary evidence and by the topography of the country, and our knowledge of the language and manners of the Sioux. It shows vanity in its author, but no falsification. So far as it goes, it presents Hennepin as truthful and accurate.

A later work shows a suppression after printing, introduction of new and untrue matter, and the evident hand of an ignorant editor. For this book as finally published, Hennepin cannot be held responsible, nor can he justly be stigmatized as mendacious by reason of its false assertions.

The third book is evidently by the same editor as the second, and the defence which it puts forward in Hennepin's name cannot alter the facts, or make the original author responsible.

In view of all this, it seems that now at least the case of Hennepin should be heard with more impartiality; and we call for a rehearing in the view of documents now accessible, under the conviction that our earlier judgments were too hasty.

Shea, in his “Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi,” published in 1852, was a severe critic of Hennepin. His explanation of the new view taken in 1880 does not seem to me sufficient.

Archbishop Ireland follows the same line of reasoning as Shea, and contends for the general truthfulness of Hennepin's books. In an address before this society at the “Hennepin Bi-Centennary,” in 1880, he said:

Hennepin's book had made much noise in France. Utrecht was a great literary center. It is very easy to suppose, then, basing our verdict upon the facts which I have put before you, that the second volume, the one published at Utrecht, was made up, and published, not by Hennepin, but by some stranger, some man who had adopted the principal part of the

Paris edition, adding on certain notations, which he got from Le Clercq's “Establishment of Christianity” in the new world, to bring it up, so to speak, to date.*

* Minnesota Historical Society Collections, vol. VI, p. 70.

With reference to the interpolations about the discovery and exploration of the lower Mississippi, the same author said further in this address:

238

The very matter of these ten pages shows that they were interpolated. The pages tell us that Hennepin was at the mouth of the Arkansas on the 24th of April, and yet, in the following pages, he is said to have been captured, near the Wisconsin, on the 24th day of April, the date according to the Paris edition. Besides, in these ten pages it is stated that Easter Sunday occurred on the 23rd of March. Now, Hennepin could never have made such an error. In 1680, Easter Sunday occurred on the first of April, and it is so stated in Hennepin's first volume. These are very significant facts, which cannot be overlooked, and when we take them all into consideration, together with the general appearance of this second volume, when we remember him as the scholar and close observer which the Paris volume shows him to have been, when we remember the habits of literary piracy that were then common in Europe, have we not solid foundations for saying that it cannot be proven that Father Louis Hennepin wrote and published, himself, the second volume? This Utrecht volume is the one upon which all the accusations against him have been based, and once take away from it Hennepin's name, there is no ground whatever to impeach.

Let us examine, on the other hand, some of the critical estimates of Francis Parkman, an American historian, who has, more carefully than any other man, examined all the evidence on this vexed question. He says:

Hennepin's first book was published soon after his return from his travels, and while La Salle was still alive. In it, he relates the accomplishment of the instructions given him, without the smallest intimation that he did more. Fourteen years after, when La Salle

was dead, he published another edition of his travels, in which he advanced a new and surprising pretension. Reasons connected with his personal safety, he declares, before compelled him to remain silent; but a time at length has come when the truth must be revealed. And he proceeds to affirm that, before ascending the Mississippi, he, with his two men, explored its whole course from the Illinois to the sea, thus anticipating the discovery which forms the crowning laurel of La Salle.

“I am resolved,” he says, “to make known here to the whole world the mystery of this discovery, which I have hitherto concealed, that I might not offend the Sieur de la Salle, who wished to keep all the glory and all the knowledge of it to himself. It is for this that he sacrificed many persons whose lives he exposed, to prevent them from making known what they had seen, and thereby crossing his secret plans. ...”

He then proceeds to recount, at length, the particulars of his alleged exploration. The story was distrusted from the first.* Why had he

* See the preface of the Spanish translation by Don Sebastian Fernandez de Medrano, 1699, and also the letter of Gravier, dated 1701, in Shea's *Early Voyages on the Mississippi*. Barcia, Charlevoix, Kalm, and other early writers, put a low value on Hennepin's veracity.

239 not told it before? An excess of modesty, a lack of self-assertion, or a too sensitive reluctance to wound the susceptibilities of others, had never been found among his foibles. Yet some, perhaps, might have believed him, had he not, in the first edition of his book, gratuitously and distinctly declared that he did not make the voyage in question. “We had some designs,” he says, “of going down the river Colbert [Mississippi] as far as its mouth; but the tribes that took us prisoners gave us no time to navigate this river both up and down.”

... Six years before Hennepin published his pretended discovery, his brother friar, Father Chrétien Le Clercq, published an account of the Recollect missions among the Indians,

under the title of “Etablissement de la Foi.” This book was suppressed by the French government; but a few copies fortunately survived. One of these is now before me. It contains the Journal of Father Zenobe Membré, on his descent of the Mississippi in 1681, in company with La Salle. The slightest comparison of his narrative with that of Hennepin is sufficient to show that the latter framed his own story out of incidents and descriptions furnished by his brother missionary, often using his very words, and sometimes copying entire pages, with no other alterations than such as were necessary to make himself, instead of La Salle and his companions, the hero of the exploit. The records of literary piracy may be searched in vain for an act of depredation more recklessly impudent.

Justin Winsor says that some time after Hennepin published his first book, according to his own story, he incurred the displeasure of the Provincial of his Order, and that he was so pursued by his superior that in the end he threw himself on the favor of William III, of England, whom he had met at the Hague. This was doubtless the reason of his dedicating his later book to the English king. The same author goes on to say that on both of the maps published with this edition (1697) the Mississippi river is marked as continuing to the Gulf. This change was made to explain an interpolation in the text taken from Membré's journal of La Salle's descent of the Mississippi.

The explanation made by the apologists of Hennepin that the literary piracy was committed, not by Hennepin, but by “some stranger” or ignorant editor, is weak and unsatisfactory. At no time subsequent to the publication of the supposed spurious editions did Hennepin ever disavow the authorship of the book, or that part of it containing his pretended discovery of the lower Mississippi. He could not but have known of these fabrications, because these books were 240 widely published and distributed in Europe long prior to his death. He has left on record no word of denial as to their authenticity and correctness. While he may not have been able to stop the publication of pirated and false editions of his works, the least he could be expected to do was to leave on record

his formal protest against the unwarranted use of his name in publishing to the world pretended discoveries which he never made.

On the other hand, when these later and interpolated editions appeared, and when doubts had arisen at that time as to the genuineness and veracity of the narrative, Hennepin, addressing the reader, says: “I here protest to you, before God, that my narrative is faithful and sincere, and that you may believe everything related in it.” This testimony from his own pen is certainly convincing. When you couple this with the fact that the French authorities had received orders for his arrest as soon as he should reappear in Canada, which orders were based on the dedication of one of his subsequent interpolated books to the king of England, and the facts growing out of an English alliance, we are forced to the conclusion that in all the editions subsequent to the first, Hennepin was, as Parkman calls him, “the most impudent of liars;” and that these adapted narratives are, to use again the same historian's words, “a rare monument of brazen mendacity.”* While I believe that the account contained in the first book published by Hennepin in 1683 is, in the main, truthful and accurate, barring his boasting and vainglorious statements, I am at the same time forced to concur in the conclusion of Edward D. Neill, a former secretary of this society, that “nothing has been discovered to change the verdict of two centuries; that Louis Hennepin, Recollect Franciscan, was deficient in Christian manhood.”

* La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West, p. 128.